

Advisory Council to the Division of Autism Services
Minutes, November 19, 2008

MEMBERS PRESENT: Catherine Abercrombie, Jennifer Carroll, Maggie Casciato, Lauri Digalbo, Jan Galloway, Chera Gerstein, David Daniel Klipper, James Loomis, Sara Reed, Lois Rosenwald, Jonathan Ross, Stan Soby, Jennifer Ureta, Tricia Winter and Larry Wood

MEMBERS ABSENT: Cathy Adamczyk, Judy Dowd, Ruth Eren, Elaine Flynn, Mary Franco, Roger Frant, Ann Gionet, Jacqueline Kelleher, Kevin Lembo, Sara Lourie, Nikki Richer, Jane Thierfeld-Brown and Robin Wood

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS: Kathy Reddington, Lori Conchado

The meeting was called to order and an opportunity for public comment was given. No members of the public were present.

The minutes of the meeting of September 17 were approved.

There was no old business.

The Honorable Catherine Abercrombie presented on the "Process of Government" explaining the extensive steps that are taken to introduce legislation. For example, the bill to approve the pilot program first had to be drafted. Then it was discussed by the Public Health Committee. Subsequently, because it involved the expenditure of money, it had to go through the Appropriations Committee. The Appropriations Committee forwarded the bill to the Human Services Sub-Committee, after which it returned to Appropriations.

Once a bill has cleared Appropriations, it has preliminarily passed the House, but it still needs to be formally put on the calendar for both the House and Senate. It also needs to be taken up and approved by the Senate (for a bill originating in the Senate, the process might be reversed). . Once a bill has cleared the Senate, it still needs to be passed by both houses. Many bills are passed by being put on a consent list. Bills on the consent list are approved unanimously, often late in the session. However, bills on the consent list can be removed from the list if a member objects.

Bills are sometimes attached to other bills as amendments. This can sometimes improve the combined bill's chance of passage, but it can also work the other way.

In addition, there are budgetary negotiations that go on between the leadership and the Executive Branch. OPM gets involved as bills go to the Appropriations Committee. We are hopeful of having a presentation on OPM's role in more detail at our next meeting; at this meeting its presence was mentioned but not discussed in detail. However, as a result of these negotiations, a bill's expenditures may also not be included in the final budget

agreement. This can be quite frustrating to people who have worked all session to get a particular bill passed.

Given the complexity and extent of the process, she stressed the importance of educating legislators on autism and making constituents aware they must advocate by calling their legislators and the Governor's Office, as this is expected to be a difficult year for the program.

There was discussion about the likelihood of the Medicaid Waiver on autism being approved in this legislative session. Kathy Reddington is working with DMHAS to try to include in the waiver individuals in their Young Adult Services program. It is currently contemplated that the waiver will be for 52 individuals (the number of people participating in the pilot program in both locations) plus the number of individuals included by DMHAS. Such a waiver would allow the state to receive Medicaid reimbursement for services it provides now at 100% state cost. There is also the hope that it may not be as difficult to expand the scope of an existing waiver as it is to have a new waiver approved and implemented. (The funding for new slots still needs to go through the budget process so in that respect it's not easy. What is easier is that the waiver only has to be amended rather than written – a shorter review process with CMS, the federal Medicaid agency)

We also discussed which state agencies provide which services. The report on recommendations that were made to the State of CT several years ago has a chart illustrating the current service providers. Kathy Reddington agreed to forward a link to that report.

Following this comprehensive discussion, Kathy Reddington provided an overview of the expansion of the program to the Hartford area. A new case manager was hired and is currently working on individual plans and budgets. Sixteen clients have been approved, and she expects that there will be room for two additional individuals. Combined with the 34 in the New Haven region, this will bring the pilot program to 52 individuals. The division sponsored an autism specific training of 34 staff members working for our private providers. Preliminary results of the Feasibility Study are positive, with employment being one area of great success. Housing is an area that was mentioned as needing more resources.

The outcome study is moving along, but only preliminary data are available at this time.

The Walgreen's Distribution Center, which is seeking to employ people with disabilities, is progressing. They have hired an agency to provide job coaches, and BRS also has a presence there. One factor that will limit who can be served by this opportunity is Walgreen's requirement for all jobs to be full time and a requirement to fulfill mandatory overtime needs as required.

There was discussion about concerns both by legislators and parents regarding areas of the state that are not being served by the pilot project. On the one hand, we believe that

the more pressure that is put on legislators, the more likely it is that the geographic coverage of the pilot may be extended. However, we are concerned that individuals who are disappointed at the lack of coverage in their state may not see the importance of continued efforts simply to ensure the continuation of what is already in place. After considerable discussion, we agreed that we would take the following steps:

- We will draft a letter to be sent by members of the Advisory Council to their constituencies. The content of the letters would be identical, but rather than coming from the Council as a whole, they would come from individuals. A task force to put this letter together was formed consisting of David Daniel Klipper, Lois Rosenwald, Chera Gerstein, Jennifer Ureta, Maggie Casciato, Sara Reed and Jonathan Ross.
- We plan to reach out to the public, both through inviting people to come to meetings to express their concerns to us and to have a public forum. We discussed who should attend such a forum in addition to Advisory Council members. We are hoping for members of the legislature as well. Kathy Reddington, Lois Rosenwald and Rep. Abercrombie will work on planning this forum. We anticipate that the forum(s) would take place in February or March 2009.

Separately, David Daniel Klipper invited comment on the possibility of the Advisory Council fulfilling its mandate in its bylaws of providing recommendations to the Division of Autism Services. After considerable discussion, we agreed that we would complete a formal report containing recommendations from the Provider and Housing Committees (and possibly the Data Committee as well) by the end of June 2009. The Medicaid Waiver Committee's work is being incorporated into the design of the Medicaid Waiver on a real-time basis, and a separate report did not seem necessary.

The balance of the meeting was comprised of the Committees meeting among themselves. Subject to additional input from members, we agreed that at our January meeting we would seek to have Judy Dowd give us a report regarding OPM and its role in the legislative process, Kathy Reddington will present the data that she is going to be submitting to the legislature, and the committees will report on their progress.

The meeting adjourned at 12 noon.